THE ORTHODOX WORD

May - June 1975

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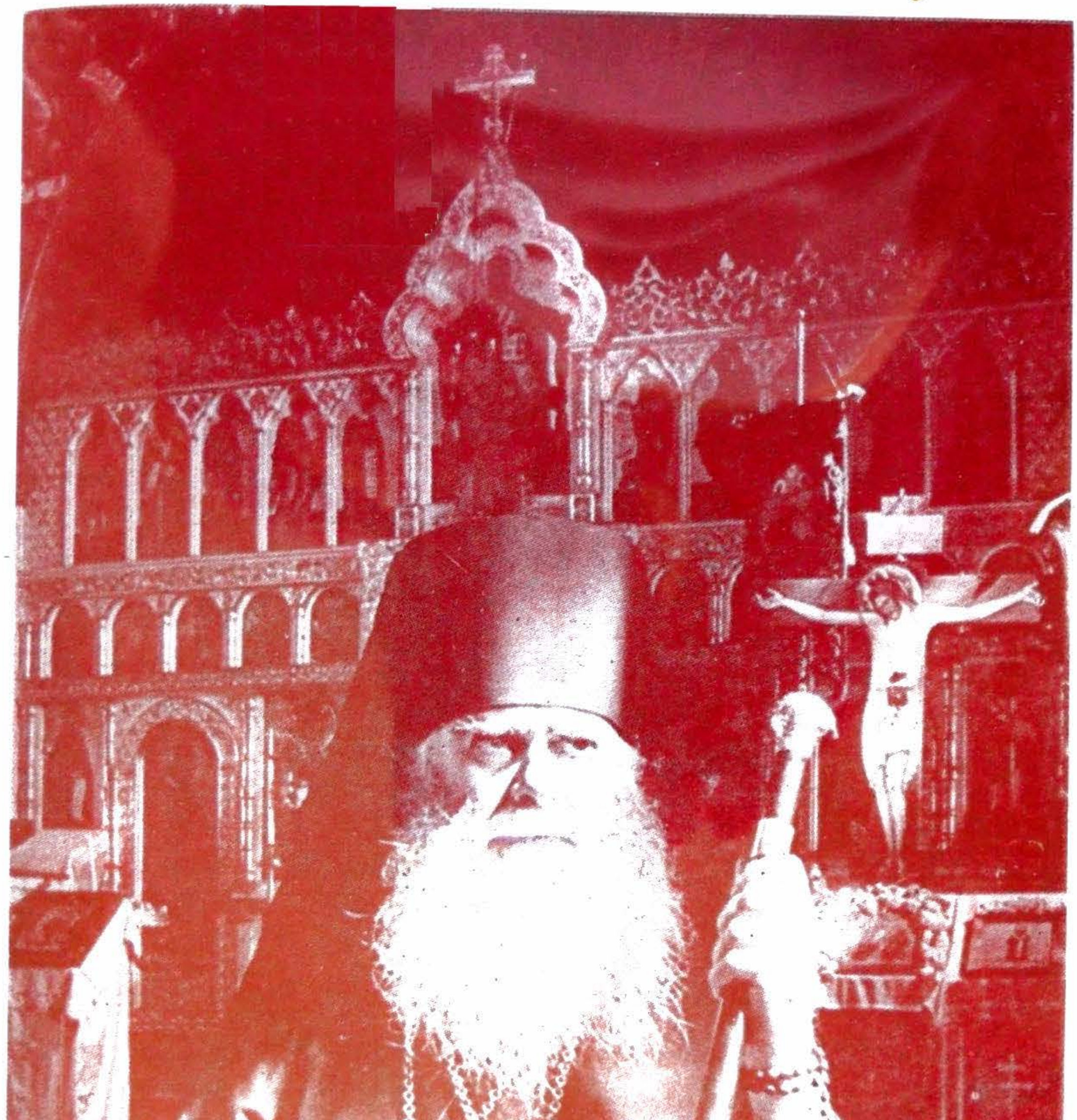

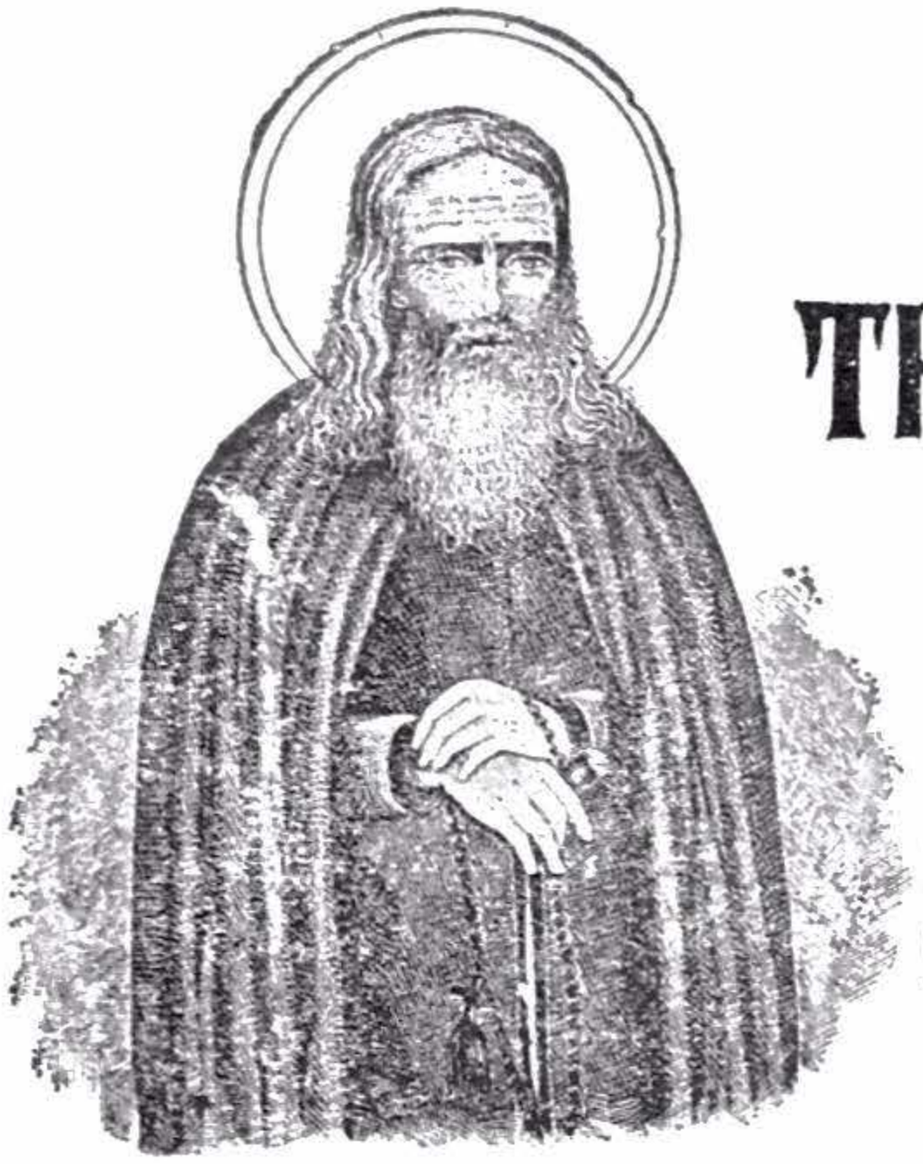

THE ORTHODOX WORD

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OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF
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Established with the blessing of His Eminence the late *John* (*Maximovitch*), Archbishop of Western America and San Francisco, Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

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OUR LIVING LINKS
WITH THE HOLY FATHERS

ARCHBISHOP AVERKY *of Jordanville*

IN OUR CONFUSED DAYS, when a hundred conflicting voices claim to speak for Orthodoxy, it is essential to know *whom one can trust as spokesmen for true Orthodoxy.* It is not enough to claim to speak for Patristic Orthodoxy; one must be in the genuine *tradition* of the Holy Fathers, not merely "rediscovering" them in a modern academy or seminary, but actually receiving their tradition from one's own fathers. A merely clever explainer of the Patristic doctrine is *not* in this tradition, but only one who, not trusting his own judgment or that of his peers, is constantly asking of his own fathers what is the proper approach to and understanding of the Holy Fathers.

Archbishop Averky, Abbot of Holy Trinity Monastery and now marking his 25th year as Rector of Holy Trinity Seminary, is in this genuine Patristic tradition as few other living Orthodox fathers. A disciple of the great 20th-century theologian and holy hierarch, Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava (†1940), Archbishop Averky is a bearer and transmitter, in a direct and unbroken line of Orthodox theologians, of the genuine Patristic doctrine which is in danger of being eclipsed by today's generation of Western-educated proud "young theologians." In recent years his voice has resounded and thundered as never before in the pages of *Orthodox Russia* as he strives to give the true Orthodox teaching to Orthodox Christians who are rapidly losing the salt of Orthodoxy. His excellent article on "Christianity" and "Orthodoxy," showing the solidarity of True-Orthodox Christians today in Russia, Greece, and the Diaspora, has already been printed in English (see *Orthodox Life*, May-June, 1975). In the article that follows he gives the authentic Orthodox teaching on holy zeal, as against those who fall short of it and make senseless compromises with the fashions of this world, as well as against those who err on the "right" side, by inexperience or immaturity, and quote canons and Fathers without understanding the spirit behind them.

HOLY

I am come to send fire on the earth.
and what will I, but that it be already kindled?
Luke 12:49

THE CHIEF THING in Christianity, according to the clear teaching of the Word of God, is the *fire of Divine zeal*, zeal for God and His glory — the *holy zeal* which alone is able to inspire man in labors and struggles pleasing to God, and without which there is no authentic spiritual life and there is not and cannot be any true Christianity. Without this holy zeal Christians are "Christians" in name only: they only "have a name that they live," but in reality "they are dead," as was said to the holy Seer of Mysteries John (Apoc. 3:1). True spiritual zeal is expressed, first of all, in zeal for God's glory, which is taught us in the words of the Lord's Prayer which stand at its very beginning: *Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

Those who are zealous for God's glory themselves glorify God with their whole heart — both in thought and feeling, both by words and deeds and with their whole life — and naturally desire that all other people should glorify God also in the same way, and therefore they cannot, of course, endure with indifference when in their presence, in some way or other, the name of God is blasphemed or holy things are mocked. Being zealous for God, they sincerely strive to please God themselves and serve Him alone with all the power of their being, and they are ready to forget themselves all the way to sacrificing their very life in order to bring all men to the pleasing and the service of God. They cannot calmly listen to blasphemy, and therefore they cannot support communion with and have friendship with blasphemers and mockers of the Name of God and despisers of holy things.

A striking and extremely clear example of such fiery zeal for God's glory comes to us from the depths of antiquity of the Old Testament in a great Prophet of God, the flaming Elias, who grieved in soul when he saw the apostasy from God of his people, led by the impious King Ahab, who introduced into Israel the pagan worship of Baal in place of the true God.

I have been very jealous for the Lord God Almighty — thus did he exclaim many times, expressing his grief — *because the children of Israel have forsaken Thee: they have dug down Thine altars, and have slain Thy prophets*

ZEAL

by Archbishop Averky of Jordanville

TRANSLATED FROM SAINT ELIAS PUBLICATIONS
"FAITH AND LIFE," NO. 10, 1975

with the sword, and I only am left, and they seek my life to take it (3Kings 19:10).

And behold, this holy zeal aroused him, by the power of the grace of God which reposed on him, as a chastisement of Israel which had apostatized from God, to "close heaven" (3 Kings 17:1; 18:42-45. James 5:17-18), so that there was neither rain nor dew *for three years and six months.*

This same zeal later aroused Elias to slay the false prophets and priests of Baal, after the miraculous descent of the fire from heaven on Mt. Carmel, so that these deceivers might no longer turn the sons of Israel away from the true worship of God (3 Kings 18:40).

By the power of the same Divine zeal, St. Elias brought down fire from heaven, which burned the captains and their fifties which had been sent by the king to seize him (4 Kings 1:9-14).

That all this was in reality holy zeal which was pleasing to God is testified to by the fact that the Holy Prophet Elias did not die the usual death of all men, but was miraculously raised up to heaven in a chariot of fire, as if signifying his authentically fiery zeal for God (4 Kings 2:10-12).

But even then, in the severe Old Testament, the Lord Himself showed to His true servant that one can have recourse to such severe measures only in extreme cases, for the Lord was not *in the great and strong wind rending the mountains and crushing the rocks*, and *not in the earthquake*, and *not in the fire*, but in *the voice of a gentle breeze* (3 Kings 19:11-12).

This is why, when James and John, who were especially fervent in their zeal for the glory of their Divine Teacher, wished to bring down fire from heaven, imitating the Holy Prophet Elias, so as to punish the Samaritans who did not desire to receive Him when He was walking through the Samaritan village to Jerusalem, the Lord forbade them to do this, saying: *Ye know not of what spirit ye are, for the Son of Man came not to destroy the souls of men, but to save* (Luke 9:51-56).

And nevertheless (let immoderate lovers of peace pay heed!), the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who said, *Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of*

heart (Matt. 11:29), found it sometimes necessary to manifest great strictness and have recourse to severe measures, teaching us also by this very fact, that meekness and humility do not mean spinelessness and should not yield before manifest evil, and that a true Christian should be far from sugar-sweet sentimentality and should not step away in the face of evil which presumptuously raises its head, but should always be uncompromising towards evil, fighting with it by all measures and means available to him, in order decisively to cut off the spread and strengthening of evil among men.

Let us recall with what harsh accusatory words the Lord addressed the spiritual leaders of the Hebrew people, the scribes and Pharisees, condemning them for hypocrisy and lawlessness: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!* and threatening them with God's judgment (Matt. 23:29).

And when words turned out to be insufficient, He applied action against the lawless ones in very deed. Thus, finding that in the Temple they were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and money-changers were sitting, *when He had made as it were a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and the money of the changers He poured out, and the tables He overthrew* (John 2:14-15; Matt. 21:12-13).

And we know many other examples from sacred and Church history when mere words of persuasion turned out to be insufficient, and in order to cut off evil it was necessary to have recourse to more severe measures and decisive acts.

But it is essential that in such cases there should really be in a person *only pure and holy zeal for God's glory, without any admixture of self-love or any other strivings of human passions which only hide themselves behind a supposedly holy zeal for God!*

In the history of the Church, the great hierarch of Christ Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia, whose memory we celebrate on December 6th according to our Orthodox calendar, has become glorious by just such an authentically holy zeal, with a decisive irreconcilability towards evil. Who does not know this wondrous hierarch of Christ?

The most characteristic feature of St. Nicholas, which has given him such glory, is his extraordinary *Christian mercy*: the simple Russian people usually calls him "Nicholas the Merciful," a title based on the facts of his life and the numberless cases of his help to men.

But once this great hierarch, so glorious for his mercy toward his neighbor, performed an act which disturbed many and continues to disturb them even now, even though its authenticity is witnessed by the Church tradition contained in our iconography and Divine services.

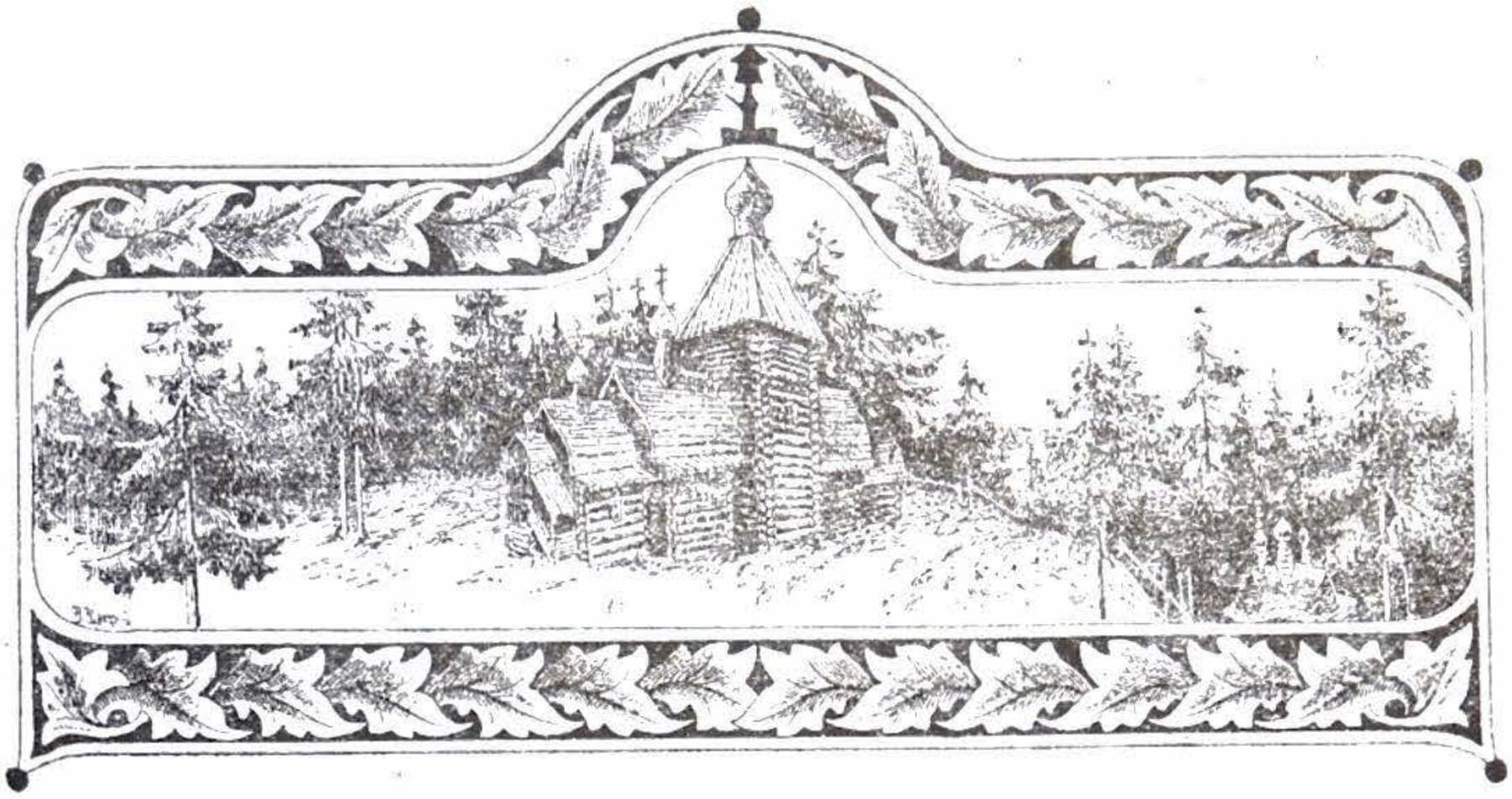
HOLY ZEAL

According to tradition, St. Nicholas took part in the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, which brought forth a condemnation of the heretic Arius, who denied the Divinity of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God. During the disputes which occurred in connection with this, St. Nicholas could not listen with indifference to the blasphemous speeches of the arrogant heretic Arius, possessed by pride, who demeaned the Divine dignity of the Son of God, and before the whole Council he struck him in the face with his hand. This evoked such a general consternation that the Fathers of the Council decreed that the bold hierarch be deprived of hierarchal rank. But in that very night they were made to understand by a wondrous vision: they saw how the Lord Jesus Christ gave St. Nicholas His Holy Gospel, and the Most Pure Mother of God placed upon his shoulders the episcopal omophorion. And then they understood that St. Nicholas was guided in his act not by any evil, passionately sinful motives, but *solely by pure, holy zeal for God's glory.* And they forgave the hierarch, abrogating their sentence against him.

By citing such a picturesque example, we do not in the least wish to say that every one of us can or should follow this example *literally*: for this one must be himself just as great a holy hierarch as St. Nicholas. But this should absolutely convince us that we do not dare to remain indifferent or be unconcerned about the manifestations of evil in the world, especially when the matter is one of God's glory, of our Holy Faith and Church. Here we must show ourselves to be completely uncompromising, and we do not dare enter into any sort of cunning compromises or any reconciliation, even purely outward, or into any kind whatever of agreement with evil. To our personal enemies, according to Christ's commandment, we must forgive everything, but with the enemies of God we cannot have peace! Friendship with the enemies of God makes us ourselves the enemies of God: this is a betrayal and treason towards God, under whatever well-seeming pretexts it might be done, and here no kind of cunning or skillful self-justification can help us!

It is interesting to note how displeasing this act of St. Nicholas is to all the contemporary consenters to evil, these propagandists of a false "Christian love"which is prepared to be reconciled not only with heretics, persecutors of the Faith and the Church, but even with the devil himself, in the name of "universal love" and "the union of all" — slogans which have become so fashionable in our days. For the sake of this, these consenters strive even to refute the very fact of the participation of St. Nicholas in the First Ecumenical Council, even though this fact is accepted by our Holy Church and therefore must be respected by all of us as reliable.

(*Continued on page 130*)



Holy Women II

ANASTASIA OF PADAN

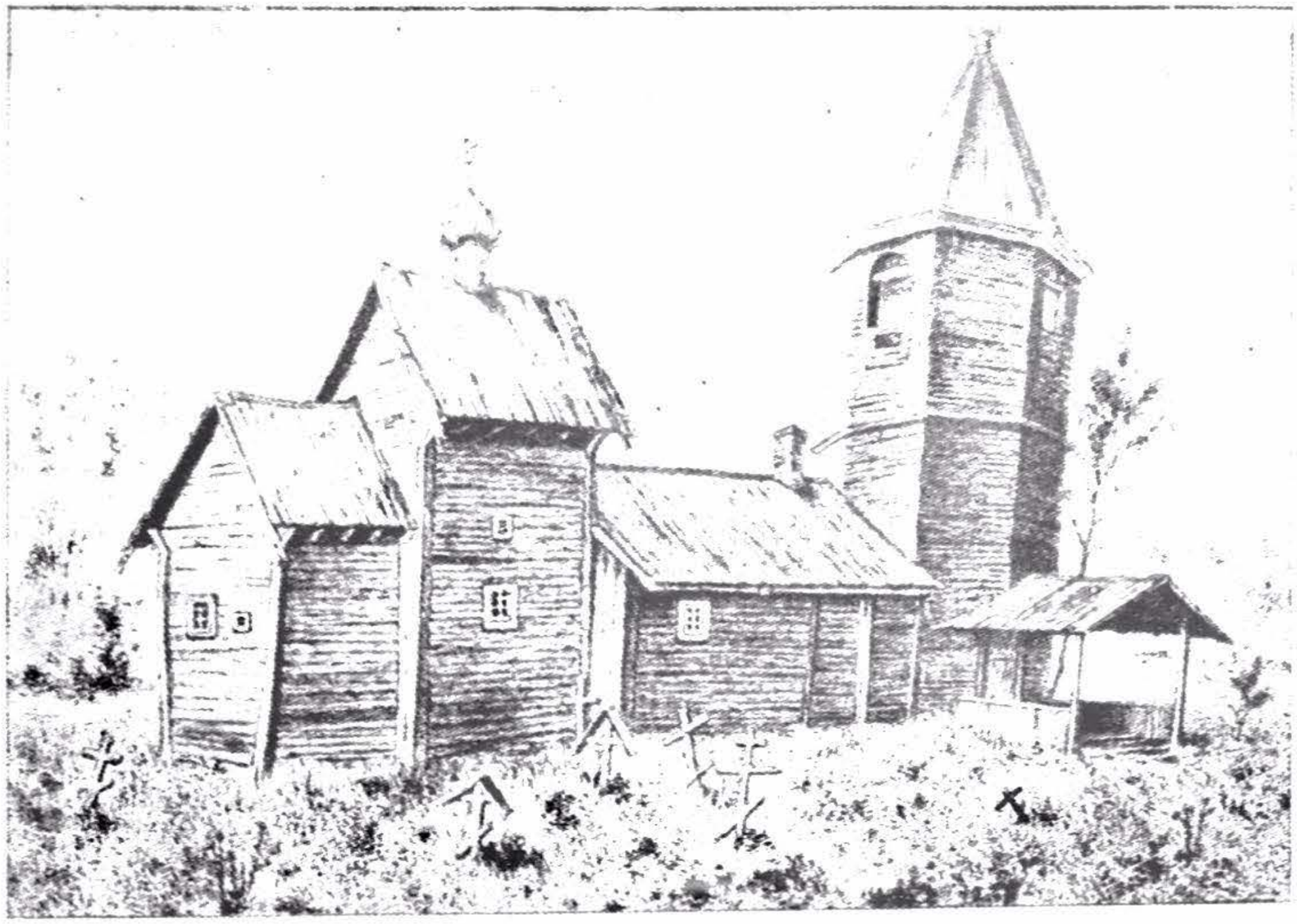
IN THE FOGGY REGION of Olonets with its innumerable lakes and dense forests, from ancient times many monasteries for men and women have taken refuge, small in numbers and little known. The Padan Hermitage of the Entry of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple, which ceased to function as a monastery in the 18th century, retained up to this century an appearance very similar to that of the ancient skete. At the exit from the forest, in the meadow, there were only three small cells at various distances one from the other; the church was not immediately visible, being very small and standing in a splendid birch forest, such as abound in this region. The charming birches and the splendid meadows, the quiet river Padan, the joyful playing of the fish in it, and the most pleasant, fragrant aroma from the birches, involuntarily forced one to think of the beautiful things of the future life, and inspired one to quiet and fervent prayer to the merciful Creator.

Founded by St. Cornelius of Padan, one of the disciples of St. Alexander of Svir, this monastery existed for 221 years, before being closed in 1764 and turned into parish property which was rarely frequented due to its isolation. The restored church of the Entry represented the remnant of a venerable antiquity, a memorial testifying of the holy ascetics who performed their God-pleasing struggles in simplicity of soul and purity of thought. This church has one wooden dome. Its roof, like a peasant hut, has two slopes and resembles more a chapel or a peasant farm than a church. The entrance to it is from the north, the altar is lower than the church itself, and the log cabin which has been placed next to the church is on the side. The small windows are placed one above the other.

Elder Ignatius (Isaiah)
†1852, April 20

Blessed Anastasia

A Typical Northern Skete: Leushino Convent



A Church of the Olonets Territory, Blessed by St. Alexander of Svir in 1522, in a Skete near the Village of Shemensk.

The building of a half-earthen birch hut, typical of the one Anastasia lived in.

There are a few icons in this church: the icon of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Mother of God, which is venerated in the neighboring villages, and the icons of Sts. Cornelius, Dionysius, and Misail, the founder of the monastery and his disciples. The small bells are hung on pillars near the church.

Around the church and the river, there were four small hut-cells. Before Anastasia settled there with her sisters, a watchman lived in one of them, and in another one a blind man, while the remaining two huts were empty. The watchman used to tell pilgrims that an Elder-schema-monk had been seen there many times; sometimes he sat in thought on the slope and sometimes elsewhere. It was the founder of the Hermitage, St. Cornelius, who appeared and grieved over the desolation of the monastery which he had founded.

The nun desert-dweller Anastasia was born in the year 1819 in the Province of Kharkov and was named Anna. Her relatives were simple, pious people from Kiev. Anna was a year old when her mother died and grew up under the guidance of her grandmother Euphrosyne, who lived 114 years, 84 years in chaste widowhood. She was a strict faster. On Fridays she would eat nothing at all, except a little bread and water after the setting of the sun. Every year she twice went on a pilgrimage to Kiev. Only for the three years previous to her death did she cease to go on her pilgrimage, when she was 111 years old. Anna obeyed her grandmother in everything and accompanied her from her earliest years on her pilgrimages to Kiev and the surrounding region. Being taught early to read, Anna from her childhood became accustomed to soul-profiting reading and began to be zealous for a holy, ascetic life. She liked especially the Life of St. Mary of Egypt.

At 17 both her grandmother and father died and this was the last impulse causing her to break with the world. She gave away all the meager property of her parents to the poor, bought some bread for five pennies, and went to save her soul in the desolate region of the Golosevevsky Hermitage near Kiev, where in complete seclusion and in prayer she could endure only sixteen days. She thought naively that she could quickly acquire holiness and dispassion, but soon she came to understand the falseness of this feeling. Therefore, she entered one of the women's monasteries in the region of Kiev and lived there for quite some time, acquiring well the basic monastic training, learning to cut off her own will and understanding.

But Anna was drawn by the solitude of the desert. Fearing to act according to her own false understanding, she hastened with fervent prayer to the Mother of God, begging Her help, asking for an indication from Her as to whether the path for which her soul was striving was pleasing to the Lord. As a reply to the girl's flaming prayer, she had the following remarkable dream.

She saw that she was holding an icon of the Mother of God in her hands. From the icon was coming forth a gentle voice which enveloped the girl in a pleasant warmth. This warmth entered within her, and although it was pleasant at first, later it became heavy and bitter. Understanding from this dream that her labor was pleasing to God, but from having been pleasant at first it would then become difficult and bitter, she went on a pilgrimage to Pochaev Lavra to venerate its holy Icon.

And from now on the Most Holy Mother of God began to help her. At this time she met three holy persons who shaped her life. First, she met a great ascetic, FATHER THEODOSIUS LEVITSKY, a lay priest who, like the later St. John of Kronstadt, led a monk's life in the world, was a highly experienced spiritual director, and had a hospice for the poor, the lame and pilgrims; she worked for him for a while, and he prepared her for her desert life. Second, upon his death she met a girl of like mind, MARIA, later DESERT-DWELLER OF OLONETS. The two girls went north into the Olonets region and lived a secluded anchoretic life in mutual obedience near the village of Maria's family. Finally, she came into contact with the great ELDER IGNATIUS of ST. NICEPHORUS OF VAZHA LAKE HERMITAGE, who was Maria's uncle. This holy Father of latter times, a monk of Mt. Athos and a close friend of BISHOP IGNATIUS BRIANCHANINOV, at first did not encourage the two girls to live alone in the forest, upon their request to guide them. But after their pilgrimage to Solovki their desire became more realistic. Fr. Ignatius, finally convinced of their determination and firmness, himself helped them with a cell in the vicinity of his monastery. After his death, when they had to leave this cell and to do everything themselves, they came to taste much bitterness, being persecuted and terrorized. Then with great labor they dug the frozen ground to build an earthen cell. This work was difficult for these weak girls, inexperienced in physical labor. All they had to eat was mushrooms, and they had "worms instead of salt." The whole summer they went barefoot, out of necessity, and there were many poisonous snakes. They had one axe which was dull and would constantly fall off the handle. With great difficulty the two of them cut down several dozens of spruce trees. Their half-chopped spruce trees would bend over but for a long time would not fall; and weeping and praying, the girls would again undertake the work. Somehow they built a cell out of these trees. They had to bail the water out of the leaking hut, and in place of a door they hung up their dresses. They made a poor stove: the top of the chimney was resting on sticks which were covered with clay, and they burned with the first fire in the stove. After a time there came a peasant who brought them an axe, saw, and some flour, and made them a door. The smoke and cold filled this poor hut where the girls

lived a whole winter, praying to God and enduring all these difficulties. Later, in place of the grass roof they made a better one, using their observation of a typical peasant board roof. It became warm, but now there was a new inconvenience: the trees, on becoming damp, began to grow, sending out long shoots. With the spring, when the earth thawed, their cell totally collapsed. But these lovers of struggle bore all these sorrows without murmuring, both then and for many years afterwards. The solitude of the desert was dear to their spirit, and for its sake they were ready to endure everything.

Once Anastasia went for mushrooms and, becoming lost in the forest, was forced to sleep under the spruces in the rain and wind. In another place of their settlement there were very many poisonous snakes, there being a snake pit near their cell in the hollow of an old tree. Once, when returning from gathering mushrooms, Anastasia entered her hut and found a large snake lying on the mat where she slept. Another time she went to the wooden barrel for bread, and in the barrel she discovered an immense hissing snake. When going after mushrooms another time, Anastasia, seeing a number of fallen trees, thought of making a turnip garden. Thus,she brought some dried twigs and began to burn them so as to clear the area; but the day was dry, and a veritable forest fire began. She fell to the earth and was entreating the Lord for help, when suddenly a cloud appeared and drenched everything, putting out the fire.

The Church authorities did not approve of Anastasia's desert-dwelling, and she had to flee farther north. She was living with a disciple when two masked thieves fell upon them, looking for money. They bound the desert-dwellers with ropes so tightly that their arms turned dark and remained so long afterward. Only when the thieves got into the storage shelf and found there only a few mushrooms and one measure of flour were they convinced that the desert-dwellers were non-acquirers. They untied them, bowed down to the ground asking their forgiveness, and left. Thus Anastasia endured great trials on her narrow path.

But with these misfortunes her voluntary suffering by no means came to an end. When the difficulties of life did not chase her away from the desert, the enemy of the human race began to disturb her with despondency, boredom, inexplainable fear, voices, threats, visions. But the Lord did not leave her, for the sake of her profound humility and her firm faith. He consoled her with visions during sleep.

(To be continued.)

ST. NICODEMUS OF KOZHA LAKE

Troparion, Tone 1

THOU DIDST COME from the reigning city of Moscow and the great monasteries which are there,* and being guided by the Providence of the Divine Mind thou didst strive towards the lands by the sea.* Thou didst settle in the wilderness,* avoiding worldly tumult and being armed with the power of the Holy Spirit,* banishing thine enemies by the weapon of the Cross,* perfecting thy life by fasting and unceasing prayer,* zealously imitating the great Fathers Anthony and Onuphrius* and Paul of Thebes.* Pray with them to the Lord, O Father Nicodemus,* that our souls may be saved.

THE LIFE OF

St. Nicodemus of Kozha Lake

ANCHORITE OF THE ARCTIC TUNDRA*

Commemorated July 3.

SAINT NICODEMUS was born in the village of Ivankova, near the city of Rostov, in the middle of the 16th century. In holy Baptism he was called Nicetas. His parents were wealthy and pious peasants. Nicetas was brought up in the spirit of Christian piety, and when he grew old enough he began to help his father with farm labors, and often shepherded a flock in the field. Once while he was in the field he heard a voice saying, "Nicodemus! Nicodemus!" The boy looked around, but seeing nothing he understood that this was a Divine voice addressed to him, and he became frightened. Returning home, he told everything to his parents, and they understood that the voice signified the Divine calling of their son to monasticism; and thus they explained it to him. But Nicetas at this time was only twelve years old, and so he did not immediately leave his parents to fulfill his calling, but rather, placing all his trust in God's will, he remained with them and lived in obedience to them until their death, which occurred soon thereafter.

Having buried his parents, Nicetas set out for the city of Yaroslavl, where he lived for a long time. Here he learned to forge nails and thus earn his living. This occupation gave him more income than he needed for the satisfaction of his limited needs, and thus, rejoicing, he gave all beyond what he needed as alms to the poor. He passed his life in untiring love of labor, and fervently attended God's temple, praying warmly, remembering the voice in the field and entreating that its meaning might be made known to him, which soon, indeed, came to pass.

* Translated from *Russian Pilgrim,* 1894, nos. 23, 25, 27, with additions from *Pravoslavny Sobesednik,* published by the Kazan Theological Academy, 1858, and the *Lives of Saints* by Archbishop Philaret of Chernigov, St. Petersburg, 1892-1900, volumes for May, June, July and December.

From Yaroslavl Nicetas moved to Moscow, where he began to work with a certain man named Tveryanin, whose wife was an evil and adulterous woman. The pious life of the two friends, their frequent conversations which were foreign to all immodesty, and their almost constant spending of time at labor, did not please this evil woman. So as to be delivered from all this, she resolved to kill her husband. With this in mind, she made a pudding and, after putting poison in it, offered it at dinner to her husband and Nicetas, who was with them at that time. The two suspected nothing and ate. After dinner Tveryanin immediately died, and Nicetas, even while remaining alive, began to suffer pains in the stomach. This affliction so exhausted Nicetas that he could no longer work alone, and he decided to sell his handiwork and go to another place.

When he went out with this purpose in mind, there came up to him someone in rags, asking: "Nicetas, why are you sick and what has happened to you? Tell me everything without hesitation." Nicetas related everything to him, just as it had happened. To this the unknown one replied: "Come, child Nicetas, at the sixth hour of the day, to the slope of the Protection Cathedral; there you will see me, and I will give you something to drink. The prayers of the Most Holy Mother of God will hepl you, and you will be healed." When Nicetas, at the assigned hour, came to the Protection Cathedral, the unknown one came out to meet him with a small vessel; giving him this vessel, he commanded Nicetas to make the sign of the Cross and drink of it. When Nicetas had drunk, the unknown one — who was in reality St Basil, the fool for Christ's sake of Moscow* — vanished from his sight, and Nicetas felt himself completely well.

AFTER THIS MIRACULOUS healing, Nicetas began to ask himself whether it were not the time at last to dedicate his life, which God had so long preserved, entirely to His service, and thus to fulfill the calling of his childhood. To answer this question, Nicetas went to Kulishki, where the clairvoyant Elder Elias lived and gave soul-saving counsel. He had scarcely reached the cell of the Elder when the latter, who was surrounded by a great crowd of people, cried out prophetically to him: "From where has the desert-dweller of Khozyug come here?" Thus he answered the secret thought of the future ascetic. All doubt and wavering now vanished from his soul. Nicetas immediately sold all that he had, gave the money to the poor, and coming to the Chudov monastery in Moscow, entreated the Archimandrite

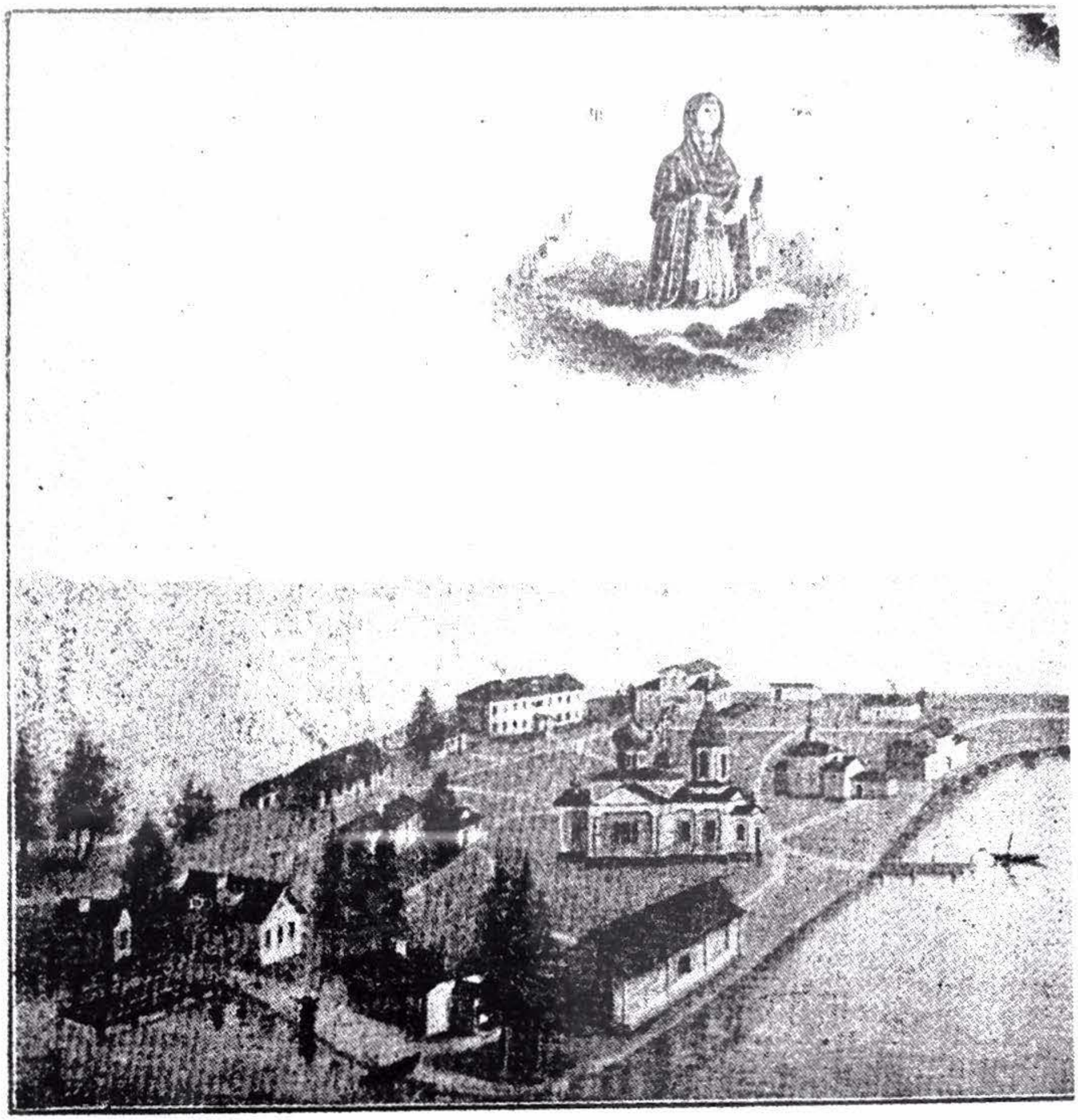
*†1552, Commemorated on August 2.

STS. ADRIAN AND THERAPONTES OF MONZA
and STS. SERAPION AND NIKODEMOS OF KOZHA LAKE

Paphnutius to receive him into the brotherhood and give him the monastic vows. Paphnutius received the meek laborer with love, placing upon him a forty-day fast and other obediences. When Nicetas had fulfilled everything carefully, with meekness and obedience, studying at the same time the Divine Scripture, Paphnutius clothed him in the Angelic habit and called him Nicodemus, in honor of St. Nicodemus the prosphora-baker of the Kiev Caves, on whose feast day the tonsure was performed, on October 31, 1595. And so the prophecy of the voice in the field, which had called Nicetas by the name of Nicodemus, was fulfilled.

St. Nicodemus spent eleven years in the Chudov monastery under the guidance of the intelligent and loving instructor, Archimandrite Paphnutius. This Paphnutius was a very spiritual man who had been a monk in the desert monastery of St. Paul of Obnora, where he had had a striking spiritual experience that changed the whole course of his life, as well as that of his close friend and fellow ascetic, *St. Adrian of Monza*.** Paphnutius knew that the blessed Adrian had had a mysterious dream in his youth, in which he was shown a certain holy place, a hermitage with a church between two rivers, which was fore-ordained to be the place of his ascetic labors. The two friends prayed fervently to God to be worthy to find this place, the secret of which

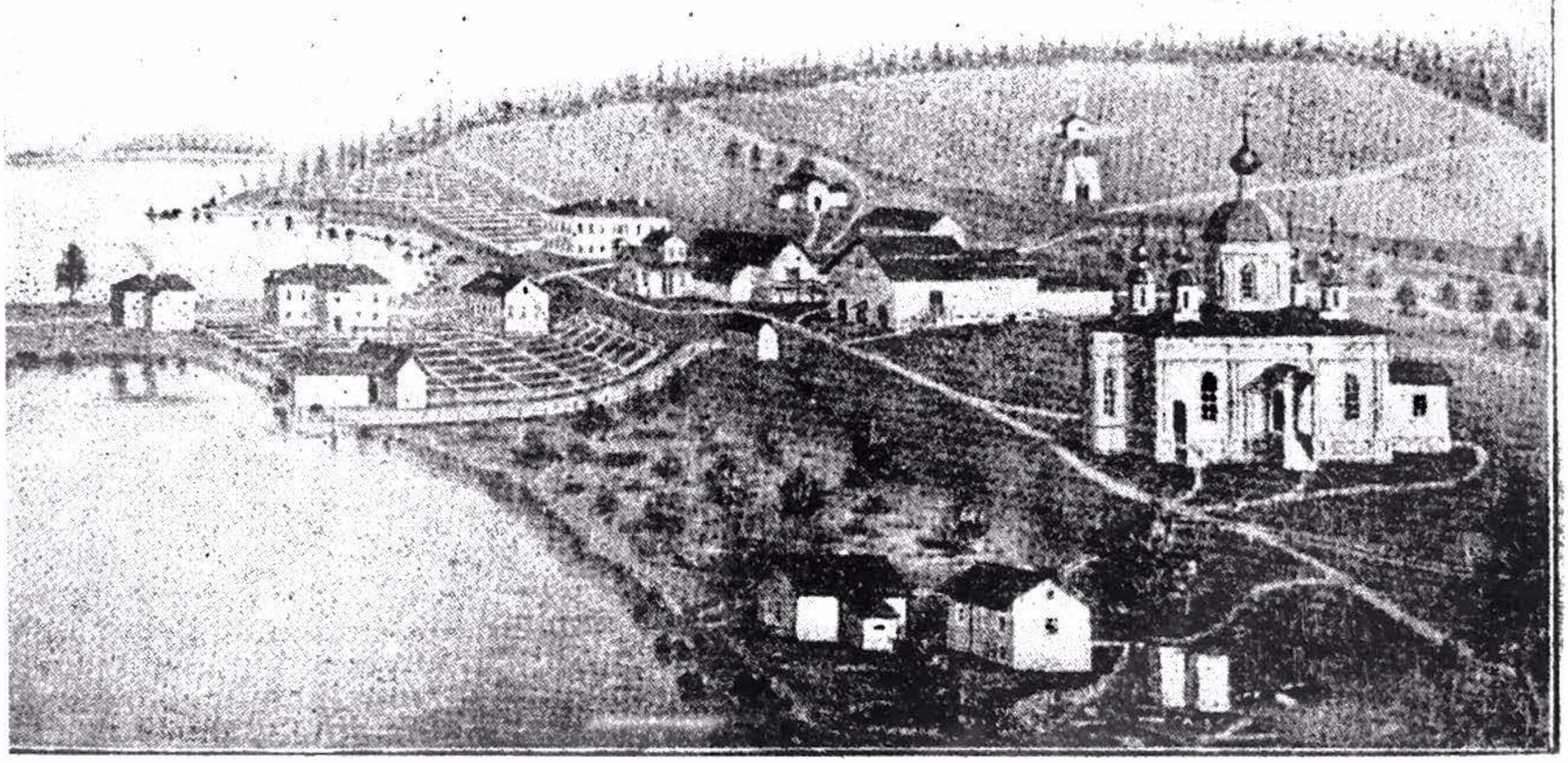
**†1619, May 5.



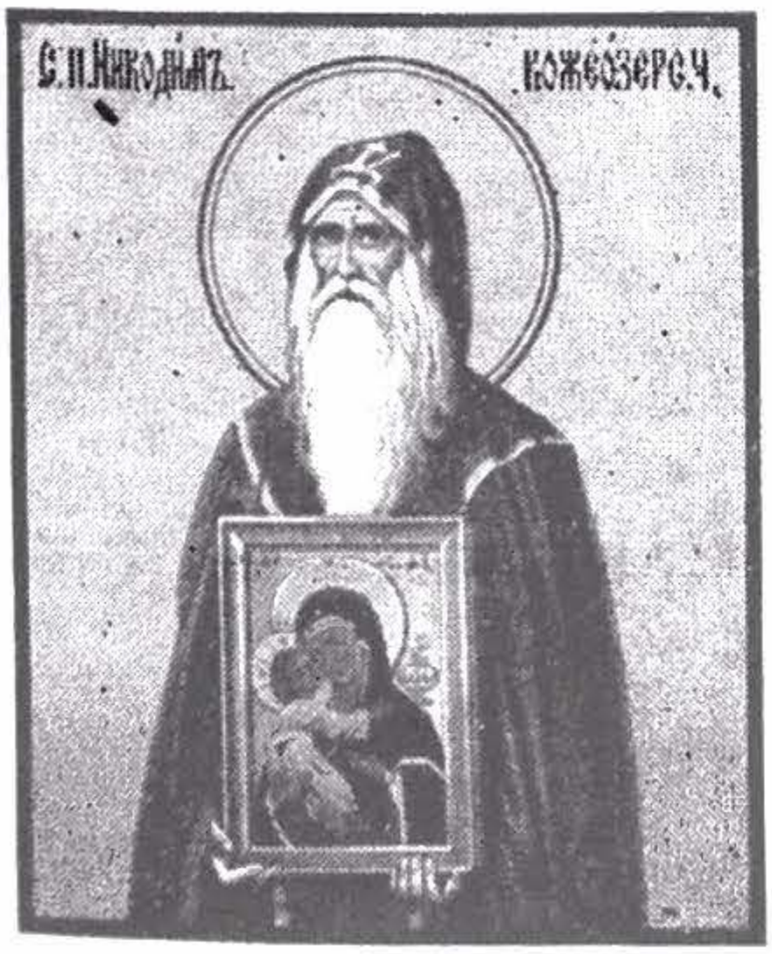
Folk icon and pictures of the Kozha-Lake Monastery 100 years ago

The Most Holy Theotokos and St. Nicodemus protecting

A typical chapel of the tundra similar to St. Nicodemus' abode at Khozyug



the Monastery, built over dried and cultivated tundra land



St. Nicodemus with his icon
of the Vladimir Theotokos

The Kozha-Lake Abbots:
Sts. Abramius and Serapion

St. Nicodemus Going for Water by the Stream.
A Water Color from *Russian Pilgrim*, 1914

Metropolitan Paphnutius for a long time tried to persuade St. Nicodemus to stay with him, not wishing to be separated from his beloved disciple; but seeing his unbending resolve, and himself loving the desert, he blessed him to depart, and gave him in blessing an Icon of the Vladimir Mother of God. And thus St. Nicodemus, after living in Krutitsa for just one year, set out for a desert hermitage in the Far North.

The desert-dwellers of the North were well known in Moscow at this period, and the pious Muscovites loved them dearly. Many of them would come to the capital for one need or another, and the noblemen and even the Tsars received them warmly and heaped gifts upon them, even entreating them to be godfathers for their children. One desert-dweller who was beloved in Moscow was *St. Serapion of Kozha Lake*,** at whose hermitage in the Arctic tundra swamps St. Nicodemus now decided to settle.

SAINT SERAPION was a Tatar Prince, captured at Kazan, who was then baptized and so came to love the Orthodox Faith that he resolved to leave the world and struggle in the northern wilderness. On a desert peninsula in Kozha Lake he met the anchorite Niphon, who became his elder. The two of them lived on grass and berries. After a period of trial, Niphon tonsured his disciple in the Angelic habit, and soon other brothers began to join them. After the death of Niphon, St. Serapion went to Moscow in 1584, receiving land from the Tsar for the new monastery. In 1608 the Saint's disciple Abraham was made abbot, and St. Serapion himself withdrew to end his days in solitude.

When St. Nicodemus came to Kozha Lake he was received with love by St. Serapion and Abbot Abraham and joined to the brotherhood, which at that time numbered some forty monks. But here also St. Nicodemus did not stay for long, only a year and a half, laboring in the prosphora-bakery, thus imitating his patron Saint. Then, fleeing glory and honor, with the blessing of the superior, he went into the nearby wilderness of the river Khozyug, in the summer of 1609; and now another prophecy, that of the blessed Elias, was fulfilled: for he had called the Saint the "desert-dweller of Khozyug."

In the wilderness of Khozyug St. Nicodemus built a small cell by himself, dug the earth and planted vegetables, gathered roots, fished in the river, and thus fed himself by the work of his hands. However, he would eat the fish only when it had begun to spoil, so that his flesh might not take too sweet delight of earthly things. At first the monks would bring him milk from the monastery, but soon the Saint refused to accept it any longer. His time

**†1611, June 27.

was occupied with strict fasting and continence, almost ceaseless vigilance (for he took only a little sleep, and that standing up), constant prayer, frequently with tears, and hard labor. In this desert St. Nicodemus found what his heart had desired for so long. "Oh, humble Nicodemus," he would say to himself, "you have found for yourself a silent place for salvation. And thus, arise in spirit in this short time, even if at the eleventh hour, for the evening has already drawn nigh, and the Righteous Judge is coming with glory to give to each according to his deeds." And he untiringly struggled in the mental activity. The Saint had not only to battle with himself, but also, like every true ascetic, to wage a stubborn spiritual warfare with the devil. The enemy began his warfare by trying to arouse in the ascetic the desires of the flesh and thereby to destroy him. For this reason, he would appear to the Saint, when the latter was going for water, in the form of a beautiful woman lying by the stream. But this attempt did not succeed. Having mortified the flesh and love for the world while in the monasteries, St. Nicodemus did not give in to the temptation. He understood the snares of the devil and prayed against them, and the phantom would disappear.

It was from experience of such trials as these that the Saint composed the following prayer against temptation, which has come down to our days:

"O Master, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Word of the Father! Do not put to shame me a sinner who hope in Thee and come to Thee for refuge. O Lover of mankind, God of every consolation, bountiful and merciful, O Lord Who art before the ages and now and forever! Remove from me, Thy slave, the devil who riseth up against me and battleth with me, for like a lion he goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Likewise doth he arm himself against me Thy slave and wisheth to devour me; but give me not over, O Lord, to those who wrong me; for blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages. Amen."

Often the desert-dwellers of the Far North had to face the full might of nature, a power fierce and untamed by man. But these frightful, destructive outbursts, which broke in on the quiet of their otherwise undisturbed life, were conquered by the power of faith and prayer. "One day," writes the author of the original life of St. Nicodemus, "on the river Khozyug the waters rose up and became so high that they overflowed all the banks and inundated the whole region. They swept round the cell of the Saint, for it stood near the river, and so inundated it that it became scarcely visible; only the roof remained in sight. Then St. Nicodemus took the Vladimir Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God, with which his spiritual father and teacher, Metropolitan Paphnutius of Krutitsa, had blessed him, and went to the very

peak of his cell and stood as on a pillar and prayed with tears, singing the Psalms. Thus he prayed with tears until the water subsided, returned to its bounds, and continued its natural course." Another time, during the heat of summer, the Saint's cell caught on fire; but again, his tearful prayer with the wonderworking Icon in his hands saved him and his cell from destruction, and he continued unwaveringly on the path of salvation.

Many times the devil appeared before the mental gaze of the Saint and tried to chase him away from his solitude. "Go away from here, evil monk," the demons would cry out, "or we will destroy you." But these threats had no success. The Saint banished the demons with prayer and continued his struggles.

Seeing his complete failure and the unbendingness of St. Nicodemus, the father of lies and pride made use of the following ruse. After appearing in a numberless multitude, the demons began to depart from the Saint, promising not to return again to him because of his holiness. They thought that the Saint would believe them and consider himself perfect, weaken his prayer, grow proud, and thus fall. But when, after some time, they returned and saw the same vigilance, they were compelled, in powerlessness and with shame, to leave St. Nicodemus for good.

Then did the power of God descend upon the Saint. Having purified and strengthened his soul in the good, St. Nicodemus offered it as a sacrifice to God. And God accepted this pure sacrifice and granted the Saint to become an implement of His mercy to sinful men. God vouchsafed to him, while he was still in the body on this earth, the gifts of clairvoyance, healing of infirmities, and the power to appear in spirit to those who called upon him with faith. When the Saint's future disciple and biographer, Hieromonk James, came to him for the first time, as a layman, he was greeted by the Saint as someone long known to him. On this first visit the Saint healed him of an affliction of the eyes; another time he healed him of an ailment of the teeth, and restored him from asphyxiation; and in 1638 he appeared to him in sleep and healed him of pains in the stomach.

Again, to Cyriacus Kozlov and Maximus Peshkov, who called upon the Saint with faith in a moment of danger while sailing on the White Sea, he appeared and saved them from death. Many other miracles also did St. Nicodemus perform for the salvation of men; even his old monastic mantle gushed forth miracles for those who touched it with faith to the afflicted member. In this way the same James, on another occasion, was healed of toothache.

St. Nicodemus, an Angel in the body, having acquired Christian perfection, lived among the wild beasts of his desert as did Adam in the midst

of Paradise. Once — it is related in his Life — Abbot Abraham of the Kozha Lake monastery, who often visited the Saint and held spiritual converse with him, "entered a boat with one monk and sailed up the river Khozyug in order to examine the newly-cleared hay fields. When we were on the way back and were sailing down the river, we saw the Saint walking near the river, and around him wild beasts, those that are called reindeer, were walking, and had no fear of him. But when they heard our voices they fled into the wilderness. The Abbot asked the Saint about the reindeer, whether these beasts frequently came there. And the Saint said that it was so. The Abbot was greatly astonished at this, how the reindeer walked near the Saint and did not fear him."

Crowds of people now began to come to the Saint, and each received from him that for which he came. The fame of the desert-dweller of Khozyug spread round about and reached even to Moscow. The chief hierarch of the Russian Church, Patriarch Ioasaph I, heard of the Saint's struggles, and as a sign of reverence he sent him his fox-fur coat, asking his prayers. This was in the year 1639. St. Nicodemus accepted this honored gift, kissed it, offered up prayer for the donor, but did not keep the coat for himself but rather sent it to the Kozha Lake monastery, saying: "A single shirt is enough for my poor self." This fur coat was preserved in the Kozha Lake monastery until 1885, when it burned in the fire which destroyed the Theophany church, at which time the mantle and walking staff of St. Nicodemus were also destroyed. St. Nicodemus already felt that he had travelled the path of his life without wavering, and now he desired only one thing: to be with Christ, for Whom he had labored his whole life long.

THUS THE SAINT began to pray: "O Master, Lord Jesus Christ! Vouchsafe me to be a communicant with Thy Saints and to be a participant of Thy Kingdom together with them, and number me with them in Thy light which Thou hast prepared for Thy righteous ones." The Saint had scarcely finished this prayer than there appeared before him two men: a hierarch and a monk. Thinking that these were ghosts, he became frightened, but the hierarch said: "Fear not, slave of Christ, desert-dweller and holy zealot. The Lord has sent us to inform you of your approaching demise, for soon you shall receive the good things of Jerusalem which the Lord has prepared for those who love Him." Falling at their feet, St. Nicodemus asked them who they were. To this the hierarch replied: "I am Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow, and with me is Dionysius, Archimandrite of St. Sergius' monastery of the Holy Trinity. O holy one! That for which you entreated the Lord will be done to you according to your petition; you shall be numbered with the Saints and will be settled in the Heavenly Kingdom." With these words both

Saints became invisible. St. Nicodemus, in spiritual joy, glorifying God and feeling the exhaustion of his body, called Abbot Jonah of the monastery and, having related to him concerning the apparition, asked for Communion of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. This was seven months before the repose of the Saint, in December, 1639.

Abbot Jonah entreated St. Nicodemus to leave his cell, which had been built shortly before this in place of the Saint's old cell by peasants who served the monastery, and to leave the desert in order to finish his days in the monastery. With tears the Saint parted with the beloved site of his ascetic struggles and went to the monastery, where he was met triumphantly by all the brethren, on May 20, 1640. The Saint lived only 44 more days after this.

Coming to the monastery, the God-pleaser settled in a certain empty cell, declining all invitations to live with the brethren, and here he prepared for his end, which occurred on July 3, 1640. On this day his disciple James, who then was still the layman John Dyatlev, a peasant of Priluki, went out after dinner on an obedience. Passing by the cell of St. Nicodemus, he heard his voice. Entering the ante-room, the disciple saw his Elder sitting in exhaustion on the threshold, and helped him to enter the cell. "Go, child John, in peace," said the Saint; "may the Lord be with you all the days of your life." John went out to his obedience. It was at this time that St. Nicodemus reposed.

Then the Abbot and the brethren, coming out of the refectory, smelled an extraordinary fragrance; discovering that it was coming from the cell of the Saint, they rejoiced and went there, but the cell was closed. After saying the usual prayer and receiving no reply, they entered the cell and found the Saint already reposed. His face was bright and joyful, and the cell was filled with fragrance.

After preparing the holy relics, the Abbot Jonah and the brethren buried them solemnly and honorably near the church of the Lord's Theophany, on the south side. The Russian Church numbered him among the Saints in the year 1662, doubtless due to the influence of Nikon, Patriarch of Moscow, who had been a monk in the monastery of Kozha Lake during the lifetime of St. Nicodemus, and succeeded Jonah as Abbot in 1642. The service to the Saint was composed at that time by Metropolitan Macarius Grevensky and the Serbian Abba Theodosius, who had come to Russia in connection with the case of Patriarch Nikon.

Ever afterward, all those who hasten to the Saint for help with faith and love receive what they entreat of St. Nicodemus, wonderworker of Kozha Lake.

The Life and Ascetic Labors of Our Father, Elder Paisius, Archimandrite of the Holy Moldavian Monasteries of Niamets and Sekoul. Part Thirteen

THE MONASTERY OF NIAMETS

70. The Elder's Extreme Fervor in the Translation of the Patristic Books

Therefore, our Father himself even until his death was most fervent in the translation of the Patristic and theological books from ancient Greek into the Slavonic language, that he might leave behind benefit and nourishment for the souls of those who wish even now to struggle, to be zealous, and to pay heed to the teaching of our God-bearing Fathers.

One can only be astonished at how he wrote, for he was most infirm in body and had wounds on his whole right side. On the bed where he lay, he surrounded himself with books: here there were placed dictionaries in various languages, the Bible in Greek and Slavonic, Greek and Slavonic grammars, the book from which he was making the translation, and a candle in the middle; and he, sitting bent over like a small child, would write the whole night long, forgetting both the infirmity of his body and his severe pains and the labor. O most dispassionate and holy man! O pure soul united to God! He was entirely attached to God with love, and entirely poured himself out for his neighbor with love as well. Who among those having reason can doubt and not acknowledge and not glorify the Creator and Giver, hearing about this blessed man who had been chosen from childhood? Even though he had not been instructed by men in outward wisdom, still he had come to the stature of a perfect man and had been made wise by the doing of Christ's commandments and was a chosen vessel, being taught from above by God's grace and by the most fervent reading of the Divine and Patristic books his whole life long.

And inasmuch as, according to the word of St. Isaac [the Syrian], to the humble-minded mysteries are revealed (Homilies 56, 66) — therefore, his

St. Macarius of Corinth

1731-1805 Commemorated April 17

A spiritual friend of Blessed Paisius in Greece who, like him, also sought out diligently the Patristic writings. He discovered the text of the *Philokalia* and was a great transmitter of the Patristic tradition to our own times.

word also was powerful and effective, filled with grace, uprooting the passions and planting virtue in the souls of those who heard him with faith and love; for the Scripture says: *I have raised up one chosen out of My people* (Ps. 88:18).

The Publication of the Patristic Writings

Blessed Paisius labored for many years in collecting, comparing, and establishing a correct text of the writings of the Holy Fathers; at the same time this same work was being done in Greece by such Fathers as St. Macarius of Corinth.* Toward the end of the life of Blessed Paisius, these writings, which before this existed only in manuscripts, began to be published and printed first in Greek and then (after the death of the Elder himself) in his Slavonic translations. Blessed Paisius in the last part of his letter to Archimandrite Theodosius of the St. Sophronius Hermitage, speaks of his hopes and fears with regard to this, and in so doing gives us the most precise information we have concerning the origin of the great collection of Patristic texts on the spiritual life, the *Philokalia.*†

IF your holiness truly have in your soul a Divine, and not a pretended, zeal for the acquiring of these soul-saving books, you can give no greater confirmation of this to my soul than by accepting my sound counsel concerning your much-desired acquisition of such books. If you listen to this now with your whole soul, I believe in the Lord and am convinced that you will not err in this your desire of such long standing, but, with God's help, will be vouchsafed to behold it fulfilled in very deed and without any doubt.

The Most Reverend Kyr Macarius, former Metropolitan of Corinth, acquired from his youth, by God's action, such an unutterable love for the Patristic books which teach of sobriety and heedfulness of mind, and silence and mental prayer — that is, the prayer performed by the mind in the heart — that he has spent his whole life in the most fervent seeking out of them and in copying them out with his own hand, since he is most skilled in outward learning, and in having them copied out at great expense by the hand of calligraphers. He came to the Holy Mountain of Athos and found in all the libraries of the holy monasteries, through his unfathomable fervor and great striving, many such Patristic books which until then he had not possessed. Above all, in the library

* 1731-1805; see his Life in Constantine Cavarnos, *St. Macarios of Corinth*, Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Belmont, Mass., 1972.

† This whole section is translated from the Letter to Archimandrite Theodosius contained in the Optina Life of Blessed Paisius, pp. 208-217.

A Spiritual Friend
of Blessed Paisius
ARCHIMANDRITE THEODOSIUS
of the St. Sophronius
Hermitage

of the most glorious and great monastery of Vatopedi he acquired a priceless treasure, a book on the union of the mind with God, gathered from all the Saints by great zealots in ancient times, and other books on prayer which until then we had not heard of. Having copied these out in several years by means of many skilled calligraphers and at no little expense, and having read them himself, comparing them with the originals, and having corrected them most surely and added the lives of all the holy writers of these books at the beginning of their books, he departed from the Holy Mountain of Athos with unutterable joy, having obtained a heavenly treasure upon earth. Then, coming to the most glorious Asia Minor city of Smyrna, he sent to Venice at no little expense, paid for by the alms of Christ-lovers, 36 Patristic books, including in this number also the book of St. Callistus of which St. Simeon of Thessalonica testifies, but not including in this number the Patericon of the great Scetis of Egypt, so as to publish them in printed form. He also has the intention shortly of giving over to printing the great book of St. Simeon the New Theologian, for this book is already entirely ready for printing; and soon, as a certain person recently informed me concerning all this, with God's help the above-men-

tioned books will come out from the printer into the light of day.*

This blessed Kyr Macarius the Metropolitan has had for many years, in truth, the desire to print such books, lest these holy books be completely forgotten and be removed from the face of the earth, which was almost about to happen. He himself knew in very fact what a labor he had undertaken, and he expended nearly his whole life in the seeking out of these books, searching for them most diligently and by all means with unutterable care everywhere, and above all on the Holy Mountain of Athos; and thus he found such a spiritual treasure, which had been as if buried in the earth, long forgotten and in extreme obscurity, which for strugglers especially of the monastic order is more needful — I dare to say — than breath itself, for instruction in the mental warfare with the invisible spirits. Now zealots may more easily and with less expense than for obtaining manuscript copies, acquire these printed books.

Having presented all this to your holiness by way of introduction, I shall now give you my counsel as to how you and your brethren, and our community also, might be able to acquire authentic Slavonic Patristic books, without any mistakes in them. Your holiness knows how by God's unutterable mercy our All-Russian Orthodox Church in the latter times was vouchsafed to receive the Holy Orthodox Faith and Holy Baptism from the Orthodox Greek Church; and with the Holy Faith it also received the Divine Scripture and all the holy Church and Patristic books of holy teachers, translated from the Greek, and they are the sources of the Slavonic books, from which the Slavonic books have come. The Divine Scripture and all the Church (service) books have been corrected, by God's grace, from the Greek texts as from their sources; but the Patristic books have remained in the ancient translation, not having been corrected even up to now from the Greek sources — and through unskilled copyists they have acquired innumerable mistakes, and it is absolutely essential that these books should be corrected from the sources.

Therefore, Father, if truly you have in your soul a genuine and not a pretended zeal for the acquisition of such books, then listen to this my sound counsel about this; your obedience will be the true sign of your sincere love toward me and your true, and not pretended, desire for the acquisition of the Patristic books.

I entreat you, holy Father, for the Lord's sake, and I counsel you: strive with your whole heart and soul to acquire the above-mentioned sources, that is, the Greek Patristic books, from which there is every hope in God that the

* This collection, the celebrated *Philokalia*, was printed in Venice in 1782, the chief patron of the work being John Mavrogordatos, Prince of Moldo-Vlachia. According to Cavarnos (*St. Macarios*, p. 24), the brief lives of the Fathers of the *Philokalia* were actually added by St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain.

Slavonic Patristic books, which were translated from them of old, might be the more reliably corrected, or newly translated. In their acquisition do not spare, not only corruptible and insignificant, temporary and transitory possessions, but even your very soul; and if God wish it and we shall be alive, and it wi'l be a time of peace, then next year in the spring select from your community a most reliable brother and give him — from wherever God's Providence might give it to you — at least a thousand levs, and send him to me. And I will choose a brother from our community who knows the Greek tongue somewhat, and I will send him at your expense together with your brother to the Holy Mountain, where these books will be brought to be sold soon after coming off the press. Having bought there most conveniently, without any difficulty, at least two sets of such books — or many sets, if you wish — they will return to us, with God's help; and leaving one set of these books with us, as a sign of your true love for me in God, and for your eternal memory and salvation, they will return to you rejoicing with the other. And you, having received such holy books, send them yourself to the God-chosen and God-inspired persons of whom you have informed me, who are on fire with unutterable Divine love for such books and have inexpressible and great zeal to publish them in printed form. And they, receiving joyfully such much-desired books from your hand, being moved by the action of the Holy Spirit, will command teachers who have learned perfectly all the outward teaching of the Greek language, and who have touched theology itself not merely superficially, to translate them into the purest Slavonic language, having already translated the Divine Scripture and all the Church (service) books; and to correct the books already translated truly and reliably from them. After translating or correcting these books, they will fulfill their soul-saving desire, to strive by their blessing and at their own expense to print them for the common benefit of monastics — for the reading of Patristic books is above all fitting and appropriate for monks, — so that all monks, especially those who are genuine strugglers according to the inward man, and not only of our Orthodox fatherland but also of all the Orthodox peoples of the Slavonic tongue, Serbs and Bulgarians and others, might be able to read them. Then not only would the long-standing fervent desire of your holiness to acquire such books be fulfilled, since you would now be vouchsafed to have them, but we also, if we could be vouchsafed to have them, would put into safekeeping the books we have and read the new ones, as being more reliable, and would glorify God.

This my counsel concerning the acquisition of such books will be realistic if the news is true that the above-mentioned books have actually been sent to Venice for printing, which I presume is true; and if with the above-mentioned sum of money, with all the expense for the journey both there [to Mount

Athos] and back, one can indeed buy two sets of such books. But if — which may God not allow — this news is not true, then there would be need to copy out these books on the Holy Mountain, for which the above-mentioned sum of money would not at all be sufficient, but incomparably more would be needed. For then one would have to give at least a thousand levs of alms to the Holy Mountain Community of Karyes — that is, to all the monasteries of the Holy Mountain — so that all might willingly undertake this work and lend a helping hand. For everyone knows that all the holy places, including the Holy Mountain, are supported chiefly by the alms of Christ-lovers, especially in these difficult times; and to begin such an immense work without alms would be shameful and unfitting, if not indeed impossible. Likewise it would be necessary to give 500 levs of alms separately to each of the three or four holy monasteries in which such books are to be found, so that the superiors in them might with all joy be well-disposed to open their libraries and give over these books to be copied. Again, to the copyists, one must be zealous to give for the copying not merely the ordinary price, but a much greater one, so that they might strive with all joy and all diligent fervor to copy the books correctly, without any errors and so that after copying them they might compare them with the originals and correct them faithfully. And it is essential to copy out two sets of these books so that one might remain with us and the other might be given to you. Merely for this copying itself one would have to spend at least two thousand levs. And for the upkeep of the brethren who will be sent to the Holy Mountain, for the one or two years until the copying will be finished, and for the expense of the journey there and back, will require at least 500 levs more.

Behold, holy Father, if there would be an absolute need to copy out the above-mentioned Patristic books, in hope of the eternal benefit which would follow for the souls of those who wish to be saved, then should not your holiness, as one having Divine zeal for this, expend with all fervor such a sum of money for the acquisition of such a priceless spiritual treasure? And not only this, but if there were need, should one not lay down even one's own life for the acquisition of them, for the sake of the benefit of our neighbor? In truth, one should. And if for the building of a stone guest-house with an iron roof you have expended such a sum, should one not expend an incomparably greater sum for the acquisition of the afore-mentioned books, for the sake of one's own and one's neighbor's eternal benefit?

But inasmuch as I believe that the news of the printing of these books is not false, but true, therefore your holiness is spared such a great expense for having them copied out, but only need to expend the lesser sum, set forth above, for the purchase of these books. And if your holiness, even though you might

desire it with all your soul, in no way are able to do this, either because of your extreme and utter monastic Christ-imitating poverty, or for other good reasons, or because of the conditions of the present time: then God will not judge you, since you were willing with all fervor to do this, but could not. And if this should happen, I entreat you fervently, for the Lord's sake, not to disdain at least this my final counsel: to present this news of the printing in Venice of the Greek Patristic books to those persons of whom you have informed me; and they, as God-inspired men who have unutterable Divine zeal for such books and who are powerful, might most easily, after their printing, receive such books, and after a faithful translation of them into the Slavonic tongue might publish them in printed form; and then your holiness would be spared the above-mentioned expense and might more easily, with God's help, acquire them, and then your heartfelt desire for the acquisition of these books would be fulfilled in very fact.

I entreat your holiness, if my letter of reply to His Eminence* should come into your hand, to deliver it yourself. In it I have written concerning the cause of my not sending the books to your holiness, and concerning the above-mentioned news of the sending of these books for printing, and a petition to His Eminence that he deign to exhort your holiness to obey the counsel which I have written you, and that is all; therefore, have no doubt about delivering it yourself, and give it to His Eminence, before whose holy feet I mentally fall down, bowing most humbly together with all my community, and I kiss his holy right hand, the hand of blessing.

As for the spiritual side, I should inform your holiness that concerning the publication in print of the Patristic books, both in the Greek and Slavonic languages, I am seized both with joy and with fear. With joy, because they will not be given over to final oblivion, and zealots may the more easily acquire them; but with fear also, being frightened and trembling lest they be offered, as a thing which can be sold even like other books, not only to monks, but also to all Orthodox Christians, and lest these latter, having studied the work of mental prayer in a self-willed way, without instruction from those who are experienced in it, might fall into deception, and lest because of the deception the vain-minded might blaspheme against this holy and irreproachable work, which has been testified to by very many great Holy Fathers.

And in very fact, in our days it has happened that one monk, a vain-minded philosopher, seeing that certain zealots of this prayer, who are zealots not according to reason, have fallen into a certain deception because of their

* Most likely Metropolitan Gabriel of Petersburg, who later sponsored the printing of Blessed Paisius' Slavonic translation of the *Philokalia.*

self-will and because of incompetent instruction by unskilled teachers of this prayer, has not laid the blame for this on the self will and unskilled instruction, but rather, the devil instigating him, he has armed himself with blasphemy against this holy prayer, so that he has incomparably surpassed even the thrice-cursed heretics of old, Barlaam and Acindynus, who blasphemed against this prayer. So many frightful and shameful blasphemies has he raised up against this holy prayer and the zealots and performers of it, neither fearing God nor being ashamed before men, as to be intolerable for the chaste human ear; and what is more, such a great persecution has he raised up against the zealots of this prayer that some, abandoning everything, have fled to this land and live here in the wilderness in a God-pleasing manner, while some who are wanting in understanding have been brought to such foolishness by his corrupt words, as we have heard, that they have taken some Patristic books, tied a brick to them, and thrown them in a certain river. And so powerful were his blasphemies that some, without a blessing, were about to forbid the reading of the Patristic books. But when, not being satisfied with oral blasphemies, he intended to give them over to writing, he became blinded in both eyes by Divine chastisement, and his God-hating intention was cut off.

Therefore, as I said above, I fear and tremble, lest the self-willed fall into deception, and by means of deception into blasphemies, and by means of blasphemies into doubt concerning the teaching of our God-bearing Fathers who have been taught concerning this prayer by the grace of the All-Holy Spirit in very fact and experience, and who teach it with Divine wisdom to strugglers who are fervent to force themselves to this work with all humility of wisdom.

The Patristic books, and especially those concerning true obedience, sobriety of mind and silence, heedfulness and mental prayer performed with the mind in the heart, are suitable only for the monastic order and not for all Orthodox Christians in general. Therefore the God-bearing Fathers, in teaching about this prayer, say that its beginning and unwavering foundation is true obedience, from which is born true humility, and humility preserves those who are struggling in it from all the deceptions which follow the self-willed. True monastic obedience and the complete cutting off of one's own will and understanding in everything are things which it is not at all possible for people living in the world to acquire. And how, indeed, would it be possible for worldly people, without obedience, with self will — upon which deception follows — to force themselves without any instruction to such a fearful and terrible work, that is, to such prayer, and yet escape the various and multiform deceptions of the enemy which are brought most cleverly against this prayer and its strugglers?

It is in no way possible. So fearful is this thing, that is, prayer which is not simply mental, or performed unskillfully by the mind, but rather is performed skillfully by the mind in the heart, that even true doers of obedience who have not merely cut off but have completely mortified their will and understanding before their fathers, who are true and most skilled instructors of the doing of this prayer, are constantly in fear and trembling lest they suffer some deception in this prayer, even if they are constantly preserved from this by God, because of their true humility, which they have acquired, through God's grace, by their true obedience. How much more fearful is it, then, for worldly people, who live not under obedience, to try to force themselves to perform this prayer merely from reading such books, lest they fall into the deception which follows those who begin the prayer with self-will.

This prayer is called by the Saints the art of arts; and who can perform it without being instructed by an artist, that is, by a skilled instructor? This prayer is a spiritual sword given by God, for the slaughter of the enemy of our souls; but it is a terror to one who uses it unskillfully, lest it be for his own slaughter. This prayer has shone forth like the sun only among monks, above all in the land of Egypt, and likewise in the land of Jerusalem, and in the mountains of Sinai and Nitria, and in many places in Palestine, and in many other places, but not everywhere, as is evident from the Life of St. Gregory the Sinaite, who went about the entire Holy Mountain and sought diligently the performers of this prayer. From this it is clear that if in such a holy place this Saint found no such person, then in many places the performance of this prayer was unknown among monks; and wherever it was practiced and shone forth like the sun among monks, even there the practice of this prayer was kept like a great and unutterable mystery, known only to God and its doers; but to worldly people the practice of this prayer was totally unknown.

But now, with the printing of the Patristic books, not only monks, but also the whole Christian people. will come to this knowledge. And therefore I fear and tremble lest for the above-mentioned reason, that is, for the self-willed beginning of this prayer without an instructor, such self-willed ones might fail into a certain deception, from which may Christ the Saviour by His grace deliver all who wish to be saved. Having spiritually declared this to your holiness, as if for a kind of defense, I remain the wisher of your perfect progress in all the commandments of God, and your unworthy entreater before God,

Paisius, Elder

Next Issue: Further Labors in the Translation of the Patristic Writings

HOLY ZEAL

(*Continued from page 99*)

All of this happens, of course, because among contemporary people, even those who call themselves "Christians," there is no longer an authentic holy zeal for God and His glory, there is no zeal for Christ our Saviour, zeal for the Holy Church and for every holy thing of God. In place of this there prevails a *luke-warm indifference*, an indifferent attitude to everything except one's own earthly well-being, with a forgetfulness of the just judgment of God which unfailingly awaits all of us, and of the eternity which will be revealed after death.

And without this holy zeal, as we emphasized at the beginning, *there is no true Christianity, no authentic spiritual life — life in Christ.* That is why this has been replaced now by all kinds of cheap surrogates, at times quite low ones, which however often answer to the tastes and attitudes of contemporary man. And therefore such pseudo-Christians, skillfully covering up their spiritual emptiness by hypocrisy, often have great success in contemporary society, from which authentic spirituality has been rinsed out; while authentic zealots of God's glory are despised and persecuted as "difficult people," "intolerant fanatics," "people who are behind the times."

And thus even now before our eyes is occurring the "winnowing": some will remain with Christ to the end, and some will easily and naturally join the camp of His opponent, Antichrist, especially when the hour of threatening trials will come for our faith, when precisely it will be necessary to show in all its fullness the whole power of our holy zeal, which is abhorred by many as "fanaticism."

But at the same time one should not forget that, besides true holy zeal, there is also a zeal without understanding — zeal which loses its value because of the absence in it of a most important Christian virtue: *discernment*, and therefore, in place of profit can bring harm.

And there is likewise a false, lying zeal, behind the mask of which is concealed the foaming of ordinary human passions — most frequently pride, love of power and honor, and the interests of a party politics like that which plays the leading role in political struggles, and for which there can be no place in spiritual life, in public church life, but which unfortunately is often to be encountered in our time and is a chief instigator of every imaginable quarrel and disturbance in the Church, the managers and instigators of which often hide themselves behind some kind of supposed idealism but in reality pursue only their own personal aims, striving to please not God but their own self-concern, and being zealous not for God's glory but for their own glory and the glory of the colleagues and partisans of their party.

All of this, it goes without saying, is profoundly foreign to true holy zeal, hostile to it, is sinful and criminal, for it only compromises our Holy Faith and Church!

And so, the choice is before us: are we with Christ or Antichrist?

The time is near (Apoc. 22:10) — thus did even the holy Apostles warn us Christians. And if it was "near" then, in Apostolic times, how much "nearer" has it become now, in our ominous days of manifest apostasy from Christ and persecution against our Holy Faith and Church?!

And if we firmly resolve in these fateful days to remain with Christ, not in words only but in deeds as well, it is absolutely indispensable right now, without putting it off, to break off every bond of friendship, every form of communion with the servants of the approaching Antichrist, who has enlisted so many of them in the contemporary world, under lying pretexts of 'universal peace" and "prosperity"; and especially must one free oneself unconditionally from every subservience to them and dependence on them, even if this might be bound up with detriment to our earthly well-being or even with danger for our earthly life itself.

Eternity is more important than our brief existence on earth, and it is precisely for it that we must prepare ourselves!

And therefore, *ONLY HOLY ZEAL FOR GOD, FOR CHRIST, without any admixture of any kind of slyness or ambiguous cunning POLITICS, must guide us in all deeds and actions.*

Otherwise, a stern sentence threatens us: *Because thou art neither hot nor cold, I will vomit thee out of My mouth* (Apoc. 3:16).

Be zealous, therefore, and repent! (Apoc. 3:19). Amen.

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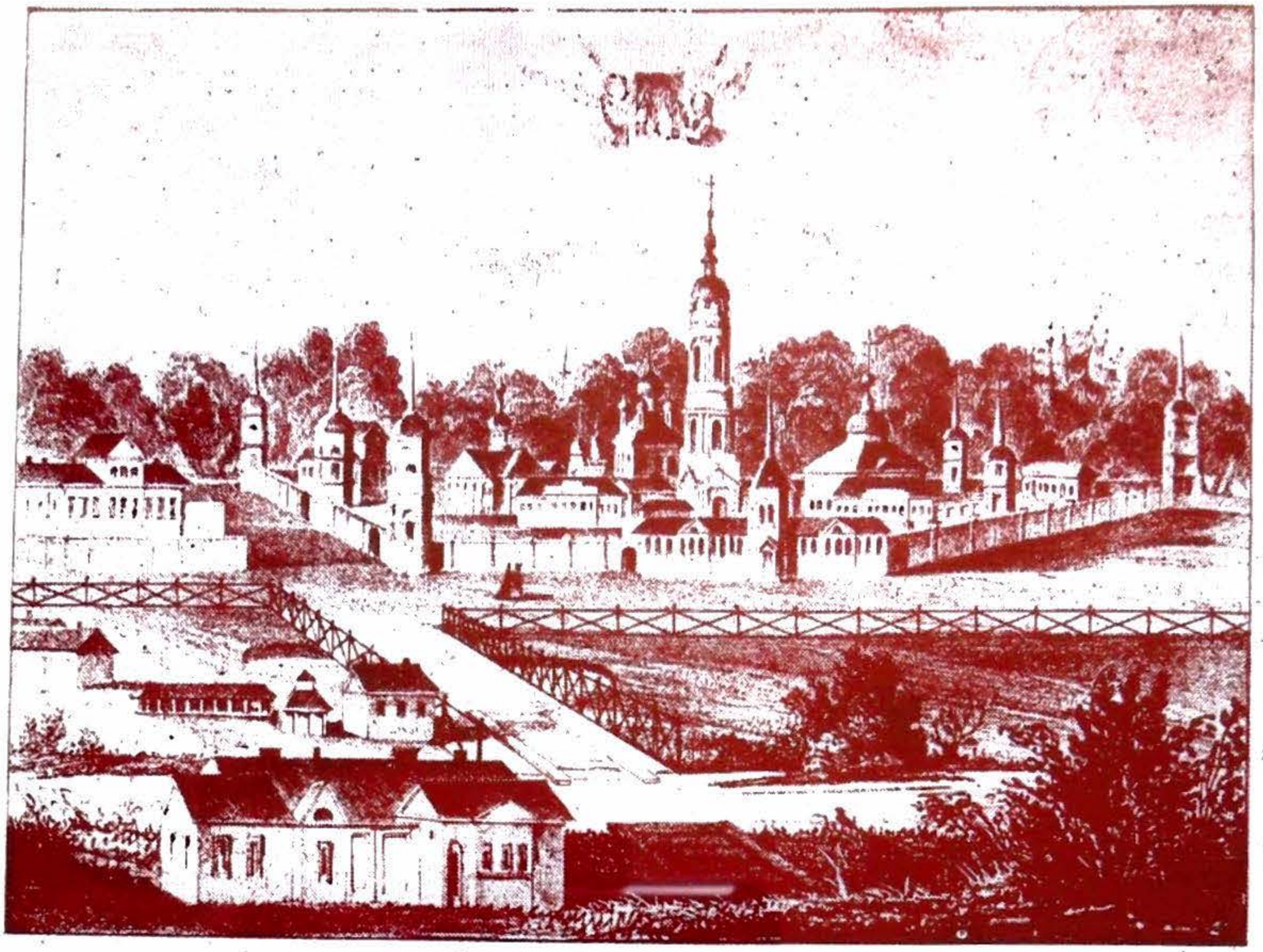

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